(e) the number of fishermen belonging to Gujarat State?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) On 15th August 2008, Pakistan released 34 juveniles from amongst the Indian fishermen. In the year 2008, Pakistan has released in all 131 fishermen. Presently there are 435 Indian fishermen, including those from Gujarat State, in Pakistani custody.

Attack on Indian Embassy

694. SHRI RAJ KUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a suicide bomber blasted some portion of Indian Embassy in Kabul on 7th July, 2008;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of persons of Indian origin including Embassy staff and others killed/injured in the incidents;

(d) whether anybody owned responsibilities for the incident; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the action Government has taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (c) On 7th July 2008, at 0831 local time, a vehicle borne improvised explosive device was exploded by a suicide bomber near the entrance gate of the Indian Embassy in Kabul. The attack resulted in the tragic deaths of Shri V.V. Rao, Counsellor, Brig. R.D. Mehta, Defence Attach in the Embassy and their Afghan driver Mr. Neamatullah who were in an Embassy vehicle. Constable Ajay Singh Pathania (ITBP), Constable Roop Singh (ITBP) and 55 Afghan nationals (including 11 security personnel and 17 schoolchildren) were also killed. More than 150 persons received injuries. A large number of vehicles, both inside and outside the Chancery premises, were badly damaged. The Chancery building was also badly damaged. The attack on our Embassy was a dastardly terrorist attack perpetrated by the enemies of peace in Afghanistan and our region.

(d) and (e) No one has claimed the responsibility for the attack. There have been detailed investigations by the Afghan Security Agencies and our own agencies into the attack. Investigations to identify all the perpetrators are continuing.

Demands of Haj Sewa Samiti

695. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Haj Sewa Samiti has lately demonstrated outside Parliament House in New Delhi and other cities in the country;

(b) if so, their precise demands; and

(c) Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes. One organization called the Haj Sewa Samiti has demanded for:

(1) Grant of autonomous status and delegation of more powers to the Haj Committee of India (HCOI) and State Haj Committees by way of appropriate amendments in the Haj Committee Act, 2002; and

(2) Increase in the Haj quota for India by 50,000 at least.

(c) The proposed Amendment Bill for Haj Committee Act, 2002 is under Ministry's consideration. As regards increase in Haj quota, the Royal Government of Saudi Arabia has increased the quota for India for Haj 2008 to 167,991 - as compared to the quota of 157,000 seats for Haj 2007.

Agreement for nuclear reactor with Russia

696. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI:
Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in a significant concession to New Delhi, India and Russia have finalized the negotiations on an agreement for an additional nuclear reactor in Koodankulam;

(b) if so, whether an agreement was reached in this regard during Russian Prime Minister's visit along with 150 business delegates;

(c) if so, whether under the terms of the deal, Russia would build four extra reactors at Koodankulam in Tamil Nadu;

(d) if so, by what time a final decision in this regard is likely to be taken; and

(e) by when the work on the project is likely to start?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) Yes, India and Russia have finalised negotiations on an Inter-Governmental Agreement on cooperation in the construction of additional nuclear power plant units at Kudankulam site in February 2008 during the Russian Prime Minister's visit to India. The Agreement is expected to be signed between the two Governments in the near future after which its implementation would start.

Supply of uranium from Africa

697. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO:
Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has decided to tap the African continent for sourcing uranium civil nuclear programme;

(b) if so, whether South Africa has also conveyed to India that it would not be averse to supplying uranium to India;

(c) whether an Indian company recently bagged exclusive rights for exploration and mining of uranium in Niger;

(d) if so, whether any agreement has been signed with these countries;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the total uranium to be obtained from these countries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) to (c) Yes. During his visit to India for the Third IBSA Summit, President Kgalema Motlanthe of South Africa